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University for Peace

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Report of the Secretary-General

Summary

In recognition of the urgent priority of conflict prevention, peace-building and post-conflict rehabilitation of civil society and the important role of education for peace, significant efforts have been made to revitalize and extend the activities of the University for Peace. The present report provides details of the progress made in revitalizing the University, especially with regard to a detailed strategy and programme for the development and management of its academic programme and other peace-related activities. Ongoing activities have been consolidated, while in parallel new activities are being initiated within the framework of a specific development programme for the period from January 2001 to December 2003. A number of donors have provided generous financial support to launch the new activities and to lay the foundation for a high-quality, balanced and innovative academic programme. The extension of this programme of education for peace across the world depends on securing strong and continuous financial support in coming years.

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I. Introduction

1. The General Assembly, in its resolution 54/29 of 18 November 1999, noted with appreciation the efforts that had been made to revitalize the University for Peace. The Assembly invited Member States, intergovernmental bodies, non-governmental organizations and interested individuals to provide financial support for the University, invited Member States to accede to the International Agreement for the Establishment of the University for Peace and requested the Secretary-General to consider ways for using the services of the University for education, training and research to promote conflict-resolution and peace-building efforts.

2. As part of the continuing process of United Nations reform, the Secretary-General has taken a number of measures since early 1999 to reorganize, strengthen and internationalize more fully the University for Peace so as to enable it to contribute more effectively to the peace and security objectives of the United Nations. A plan for the expansion of the University's activities and for the enhancement of its academic programme is now being implemented to make the University a focus of global efforts in the study of and education for peace.

3. The University for Peace was established in December 1980 pursuant to General Assembly resolution 35/55 in order to provide humanity with an international institution of higher education for peace and with the aim of promoting among all human beings the spirit of understanding, tolerance and peaceful coexistence, to stimulate cooperation among peoples and to help lessen obstacles and threats to world peace and progress, in keeping with the noble aspirations proclaimed in the Charter of the United Nations. It is headquartered at its campus of over 300 hectares located on the outskirts of San José, Costa Rica.

4. The University for Peace has its own charter set out in an International Agreement specifically approved by the General Assembly. This arrangement provides the University with a degree of operating autonomy and flexibility, under the direction of its Council, which is appointed in accordance with the International Agreement.

II. Strategic objectives

5. Over the last two decades, the world has changed beyond recognition and the nature of conflict and its underlying causes are different from what they used to be. In order to develop approaches for preventing and resolving conflict, we must improve our understanding of what is required to build and maintain peace. Education for peace in the new global environment therefore assumes great importance. It has become essential to stimulate large numbers of people on every continent to reflect seriously on human conflict, its causes and consequences and on ways to prevent its deadly outcome.

6. The University for Peace has a clear mission to advance global education and research on peace and security matters. It has the potential to make a significant contribution to world peace and progress through innovative and broadly based education, training and research. Within this mission, the University for Peace has the following priority objectives:

(i) The University will aim to become a high-quality academic institution of higher education for peace by strengthening its capabilities steadily and prudently, as financial resources permit, in partnership with such other universities, institutions and United Nations bodies as the United Nations University, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), and the United Nations Institute for Training and Research. The University for Peace is strengthening its faculty and academic capabilities in order to develop high-quality academic programmes and to provide education in peace-related areas. Procedures for peer review and academic advice are being developed to ensure the high quality of educational courses and scholarship;

(ii) The University will work in partnership with other universities and institutions, particularly in the developing countries, with the aim of assisting them in developing their own capacities to carry out their programmes. It will prepare and disseminate course materials and methodologies on key issues of peace to universities in developing countries in all regions of the world;

(iii) The University will aim to serve as a bridge between the academic community and the policy community, in particular as represented by the United Nations. This involves developing partnerships with respected universities, research centres and other governmental and non-governmental institutions so as to build international knowledge networks for education and research and collaborating with the United Nations System in undertaking educative research so as to provide a stronger basis for the formation of policy on major peace-related matters.

7. In support of the foregoing objectives, extensive consultations are being carried out all over the world with academic and research institutions, Governments, civil society, foundations and others. The University, in collaboration with Mahidol University, convened its first advisory meeting in Bangkok in December 2000. It was attended by university presidents, vice chancellors, rectors and deans from 35 universities in 20 countries in the Asia and Pacific region, who shared their experiences with regard to national programmes on peace and conflict-resolution and explored modalities and strategies for collaboration in research, education, teaching and training in areas related to conflict-prevention and peace-building (see para. 36). A follow-up meeting on the role of the military was held in June 2001 (see para. 37).

8. In March 2001, the second advisory meeting, which included eminent international scholars and prominent United Nations officials, was convened at United Nations Headquarters to discuss the future development of the University's academic programme, particularly how to ensure that the revitalization process will enable the University to serve most effectively as a global resource for education on the prevention of conflict and the peaceful settlement of disputes. The participants discussed the University's institutional plans and agreed that, as part of a general shift in the approach to the study of peace and conflict, the University could make a significant contribution to the field of peace studies internationally. The meeting was attended by the Secretary-General, who delivered the keynote address.

9. The University convened the third advisory meeting in Tajikistan in June 2001, in partnership with the Department of Political Affairs of the United Nations Secretariat, to prepare the basis for a programme on education, training and research on peace-related issues in Central Asia (see para. 35). A successful fourth advisory meeting was held in Montevideo in August 2001 with rectors and chancellors from 18 universities; an additional advisory meeting will soon be held in Maputo to launch cooperation with a network of universities and institutions in Africa (see para. 36).

III. Resource situation

10. The University for Peace receives no financial support from the United Nations budget. It must seek its financing entirely from voluntary contributions from governmental and non-governmental sources and foundations. During its early years, the University received only limited funding from relatively few sources, consequently its programmes were necessarily modest in scale and largely focused on Central and South America. The new administration, which came into effect in April 1999, has undertaken a reorganization and developed a new programme.

11. During the preparatory phase, funds have been raised to meet the needs of the reform programme. In particular, the United Nations Foundation made a generous grant of US$ 2 million to the University with the collaboration of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs, and the Government of Costa Rica, which has over the years provided strong and sustained support, has pledged a contribution in 2001. The Canadian International Development Agency has also pledged a generous contribution of Can$ 4.5 million over a three-year period. Other donors have contributed to the stabilization and revitalization of the University including the United Nations Development Programme, the Rockefeller Brothers Fund and the Philanthropic Collaborative. The Government of Italy has decided to provide financial support for a University programme in Central America and the Governments of Denmark, Finland and Germany have provided financial support for University activities in Central Asia.

12. Constructive discussions are in progress with a number of donor countries and foundations to seek funding support and collaboration for the University and its programmes. The achievement of University objectives and the implementation of its activities depend on obtaining strong and sustained financial support.

IV. Revitalization process

13. In March 1999, the governing body of the University, its Council, was reconstituted with an entirely new membership. The Council includes 10 members appointed by the Secretary-General in consultation with the Director-General of UNESCO, two members nominated by the Government of the host country, Costa Rica, a representative of the Secretary-General, a representative of the Director-General of UNESCO, the Rector of the United Nations University and the Rector of the University for Peace. Maurice Strong of Canada, a Special Adviser to the Secretary-General, was elected President of the Council.

14. With the guidance of the Council, a major programme of strengthening and expanding the University for Peace is under way. The Council has defined an innovative programme of education, training and research for peace, focused on key issues, including conflict-prevention, human security, human rights, environmental security and post-conflict rehabilitation.

15. Substantial progress has already been made in restructuring and revitalizing the University:

- As mentioned above, a new Council of experienced international personalities was established in March 1999. The Council elected Maurice Strong as President and Elizabeth Odio, Vice-President of Costa Rica, as Vice-President. In November 2000, the Council appointed Martin Lees as the Rector.
- The Council decided on a detailed strategy and programme for the renewal of the University over a five-year period and a phased development programme for the three years to December 2003, with the year 2000 serving as the preparatory year.
- The Secretary-General has agreed to serve as the Honorary President of the University for Peace.
- The Council has elected Graça Machel of Mozambique, Chancellor of the University of Cape Town, as Chancellor of the University for Peace.
- It also decided on the establishment of a Council of Honour, composed of Nobel peace laureates, to guide the University in its mission. The former President of Costa Rica and Nobel peace laureate, Oscar Arías, has agreed to chair the Council of Honour.
- The Council has decided to establish an Academic Advisory Council as the focus of a network of scholars to ensure the high academic quality of the programme.
- In order to reinforce the effective management of the University, a new management team has been installed and two internal task forces have been launched, one on management and the other on the development of the new programme. Action is being taken to strengthen the capacities for teaching and course development and to improve course content.
- Small liaison offices have been established in Geneva and New York to develop and maintain efficient contacts with the United Nations and other international organizations, both governmental and non-governmental, active in the field of peace and security, and with other universities, donors and individual experts. Additional offices are being established at Mahidol University in Bangkok, and in Maputo.

V. Principles for development of the academic programme

16. The academic programme is being developed through an evolutionary approach. Each new academic activity will be prepared through consultation, preliminary research and pilot activities. In order to ensure the high quality of the programmes, an Academic Advisory Council, referred to above, is being established and a peer-review process is being put in place.

17. The University intends to become a focal point in a number of international knowledge networks of research, education and cooperation on selected peace-related issues and to develop a strong intellectual and management capacity so as to carry out a wide variety of research, educational and training activities. A major guiding principle is that cooperation and partnership with other leading institutions that have common interests and complementary programmes to which the University can add value should be an integral part of teaching and research activities. Much of the University programme will be carried out in close

collaboration with other institutions and will be decentralized to other locations and partner institutions. Contact has already been established with some of the world's centres for peace and conflict research and collaborative programmes are under development with institutions around the world.

18. It is evident that young people everywhere and many professionals in mid-career are desirous of gaining knowledge in peace-related fields. Demand for collaboration with the University from academic and research institutions around the world has been remarkable. It is therefore intended to develop the San José campus into the focal point of an international programme network developed and implemented through close collaboration with many institutions and experts across the world. The University will utilize a decentralized network approach, supported by a strong intellectual core so that it can effectively promote the purposes defined in its charter.

19. Support of United Nations objectives in its work on peace and security is a primary factor in the development of the University programme. A number of areas have been identified for cooperation in the spirit of the General Assembly mandate, whereby the University's services may be utilized in conflict-resolution and peace-building efforts. The University for Peace can provide the education and training increasingly required in specialized, peace-related areas. It can also take full advantage of the intellectual resources and experience of the United Nations.

20. In order to enhance the coordination of their work and to strengthen cooperation, especially on programmes that promote education and wider understanding of peace-related issues, the University for Peace and the United Nations University signed a memorandum of understanding in September 2000. The University for Peace and UNESCO are also working towards strengthening their collaboration, including through the establishment of a UNESCO chair at the University.

VI. Development and management of the academic programme

21. During the preparatory year 2000, ongoing activities have been consolidated and their quality has been improved, while in parallel new activities are being developed for launching during the period from January 2001 to December 2003. As resources become available, both the faculty and the administrative support necessary to manage the academic courses are being strengthened.

22. The University for Peace will be involved in educational and training activities on peace-related issues through a wide variety of arrangements with other universities and partner institutions at different locations. In this context, distance learning techniques will play an increasingly important role. The University will also prepare modules of course materials and make them widely available for courses principally to be undertaken at and supervised by other universities, especially in developing countries. In such cases, the modules and course materials developed by the University would lead to credits for students to obtain their degree in their home university or a joint degree with the University for Peace. A detailed information and communications strategy has been adopted and a specialized Centre for Education and Technologies has been established. Steps are being taken to strengthen documentation and library services and to create a digital library. The University will base its international programme heavily on communications, networking and distance learning techniques, becoming in large part an electronic campus.

23. The Earth Council, an independent, non-governmental organization also based in Costa Rica, has relocated to the campus of the University for Peace and the two institutions are collaborating on a number of activities related to environment and natural resources and in the common use of selected staff and facilities to reduce costs. Collaboration is also developing with another related organization, the International Ombudsman Centre for the Environment and Development, located on the University campus as well.

24. The University Council has approved the further development of a peace monitoring facility, or peace complex, which will become a valuable tool for education for peace and can also be used for exploring policy outcomes. An exploratory meeting was held in June 2001 in Washington, D.C., to develop the conceptual framework of the complex. Similarly, in collaboration with two partners, Informa and Washington Policy and Analysis, an innovative proposal for a monthly peace journal is in preparation.

Launching the academic programme

25. As a first step towards developing and launching the academic programme, a number of short courses are being introduced over the next several months in the field of natural resources and conflict prevention, on gender studies in relation to conflict and on socio-economic development and peace. The University for Peace is also collaborating with the School of International Service of American University in Washington, D.C., in the implementation of a dual master's degree programme on natural resources and sustainable development, which will start in late 2001. In addition, the University for Peace is steadily proceeding with the design and preparation of other courses (at the master's level and short courses). By the fall of 2002, the University should have a small but strong and high-quality programme. The rate of development of the new programme depends of course on the success of the University in raising funds.

Programmes at the master's degree level

26. Master's degree programmes are now being developed on specialized topics critical for the education of peace-oriented professionals. In addition to the aforementioned programme on natural resources and sustainable development, other peace-related areas to be covered include international human rights, international law — settlement of disputes, human security studies and gender and peace.

Short courses

27. The University for Peace has already acquired considerable experience in the management of short courses to meet the needs of mid-career professionals in order to deepen their understanding and broaden their knowledge and skills on peace-related issues. Several organizations wish to cooperate with the University in developing and implementing special courses aimed at providing students with particular expertise and knowledge, some of which would result in credits towards degrees, while others would lead to a diploma. Two such courses are under consideration for implementation, subject to the availability of resources, in partnership with Leadership for Environment and Development International in the area of environment and peace and with the United Nations Office of Project Services in the field of post-conflict reconstruction.

Disseminating course materials

28. There is a strong demand for course materials and teaching methodologies for educational programmes on all aspects of peace studies in universities throughout the developing world. The University for Peace will develop its capacity to meet this need through the preparation, by the University itself and by other sources, and the dissemination of these course materials to universities in developing countries, taking advantage of the potential of state-of-the-art communication information technologies. This will help to multiply the impact of its intellectual investment. As an institution with close links to the United Nations family and with the right to grant degrees, it can develop course materials on a multi-cultural basis. In collaboration with partner universities, the course materials will then be adapted to respect specific cultural and institutional contexts. The packages will be supported through the Internet to provide assistance to the professors and to promote dialogue among the students by electronic means.

VII. Other peace-related activities

29. In accordance with the decisions of the University Council, a number of activities are being developed in peace and human security areas to strengthen and extend the programme.

30. First, the important role of the media in promoting reconciliation and resolution of differences by peaceful means is clear and the University Council has therefore approved the establishment of a media and peace institute. A preparatory meeting was convened in April 2001 with senior media executives, experts in peace-building and rehabilitation, training professionals, researchers and scholars from various parts of the world. The participants provided advice on the three-year development plan of the institute. A major fund-raising campaign is under way to generate the necessary funding to launch the institute, which will be based in Europe.

31. A centre for human security is being established within the University for Peace framework, in cooperation with the University of British Columbia, and activities are being planned with partners in other countries. This centre will become a focus in the international knowledge network on human security.

32. A Seminar on Human Rights and Peace was organized at the request of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights in response to resolution 2000/66 of the Commission on Human Rights. The insights and proposals of 30 international experts and scholars, focusing on the contribution of human rights to the further development of a culture of peace, were presented to an intergovernmental forum on Human Rights Day in December 2000 and to the Commission on Human Rights in March 2001.

33. Together with a number of partners, such as the World Conservation Union, the World Wildlife Fund International and the South Africa-based Peace Parks Foundation, the University has also been collaborating in the preparation of a project to establish a global partnership for peace parks. Follow-up activities are under consideration.

Extending activities in other regions

34. The General Assembly mandate clearly intends that the University for Peace should promote education and research for peace in all regions of the world. Efforts are therefore being made to expand the scope of University activities. The development of educational and research activities in Africa is a top priority and several specific projects are in preparation. The limited scope of education and research capacities in many regions of Africa implies that any project must contain a major capacity-building component. The University will support the strengthening of African capacities for education, training and research on the vital issues of peace and security through sustained partnerships with African universities and institutions. An initial phase has been launched in which the University for Peace is identifying a number of key African universities, research centres and other institutions which will become part of an international knowledge network in order to mobilize expertise and focus on priority issues.

35. A specific project has also been developed to launch peace education and research activities in the countries of Central Asia, a region exposed to threats to stability and peace. As a first step, a meeting on the lessons learned from the United Nations-led Tajik peace process was held in June 2001 (see para. 9). The meeting drew together a group of academics, experts and officials from the region and elsewhere. The studies and activities conceived and launched are a first step in the development of a programme of education and research for peace in Central Asia. The Governments of Denmark, Germany and Finland provided support for the meeting.

36. In collaboration with Mahidol University, the University for Peace convened an advisory meeting in December 2000, as noted in paragraph 7. The meeting laid the foundation for cooperation in education and research and follow-up activities are now being identified. The University for Peace and Mahidol University have signed a memorandum of understanding to develop collaborative programmes in areas related to conflict-resolution and peace-building and to establish a joint centre at the Mahidol campus. As noted in paragraph 9, a similar meeting was held in Montevideo in August 2001 and another advisory meeting will be held in Maputo in late 2001.

37. As a continuation of University for Peace efforts to build constituency and support in the Asia and Pacific region, a high-level informal meeting was held in Bangkok in June 2001 to discuss the evolving role of the military in the context of changes that are taking place around the world in terms of economic, social and ecological trends, including responses to natural disasters. Military leaders from eight Asian countries attended the meeting. The University has entered into an agreement with the Institute of Advanced Military Studies of the Royal Thai Army to develop educational and training programmes and to conduct joint research. A number of follow-up activities are being designed, that are coordinated with those that emerged from the meeting of university leaders in December 2000.

38. Following a decision of the Colombian Senate, the University for Peace is undertaking a joint initiative with the Government of Colombia to establish a world centre for research and training in conflict-resolution. The centre will aim to: (i) provide international support and experience in the development of training and research to support peace-building and conflict-resolution in Colombia; (ii) offer a forum to share the lessons learned and to develop new approaches to peace-building and conflict-resolution; and (iii) disseminate the experience of Colombia in peace-building and conflict-resolution and to facilitate ongoing exchange with policy makers, Governments and civil society in other countries experiencing protracted violent conflict.

39. The University has also initiated collaboration with authorities in Sao Paulo in order to share its experience with regard to in-depth evaluation and

coordination of public policy for preventive initiatives and actions for mitigating urban violence. A University programme of education and training will be developed on conflict-prevention, mediation and reconciliation in cooperation with mayors and other leaders of civil society in major urban areas so as to enhance human security through the reduction of urban violence and promotion of human rights.

VIII. Conclusion

40. The University for Peace can gradually come to serve as a useful tool to support the peace and security objectives of the United Nations. In this respect, it has a potentially important role as a worldwide institution devoted to the education and training of men and women who, within the framework of the Charter of the United Nations, will act for peace, progress and the good of humanity.